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**NEWS RELEASE**

**For Immediate Release**



**USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**

**"HELPING PEOPLE HELP THE LAND"**

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**TENNESSEE NRCS ANNOUNCES FUNDING FOR  
INNOVATION GRANTS**

**NASHVILLE, TN** — The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is making \$300,000 available in new grants to Tennessee farmers, landowners, State, tribal, and local government entities, and non-governmental organizations. The funds will be awarded through Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG), a component of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The purpose of the grants is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies.

Tennessee's State Conservationist James Ford says the CIG funds will be available to Tennessee landowners and organizations to allow them to increase their technical capabilities for addressing important natural resource conservation needs. "These grants offer an opportunity to promote public-private partnerships to provide innovative technologies and approaches to environmental enhancement and protection on working agriculture lands," Ford said.

Project proposals should demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches to address a natural resource concern. Project results are expected to improve and create the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches (such as market-based systems) into NRCS technical manuals or guides and to the private sector. CIG funds will pay for projects targeting innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

Applications are due in the Tennessee NRCS State Office by April 28, 2006. Project proposals will be evaluated with the assistance of the State Technical Committee based on the criteria identified in the request for proposal.

Selected applicants may receive grants up to 50 percent of the total project cost, not to exceed \$75,000. Applicants must provide nonfederal matching funds for at least 50 percent of the project cost, of which 50 percent may be from in-kind contributions. Projects may be single or multi year, not to exceed three years.

Additional information, the Request for Proposals and related forms are located on the Web at <http://www.tn.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CIG.html> and at <http://www.grants.gov> or you can contact your local District Conservationist through the NRCS-Tennessee state office at 615.277.2531.

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